



FEDERAL SECURITY AGENCY
U. S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

IN REPLYING, ADDRESS THE

Tbc. Research Laboratory,
411 E. 69th St., New York 21, N. Y.

December 14, 1948.

Dr. Joshua Lederberg,
University of Wisconsin,
College of Agriculture,
Department of Genetics,
Madison 6, Wisconsin.

Dear Josh:

I am pleased to hear that you share my feeling that we are well rid of any further problem of publication and that it isn't worth being vindictive about. I have been having quite a time, however, to keep myself from being convinced by Brand that it is only a lack of "guts" which prevents me from wanting to make a real fight over this. Seriously though, I don't quite agree that the flats of editors be accepted, since they are there to serve the body of investigators and they sometimes tend to become a little high-handed or unimaginative. I don't believe there has been any lack of integrity in this case or else I would feel much more strongly.

My occult statement about "window-dressing" is hardly worth explanation. The term window-dressing is widely used, perhaps particularly in government circles, to denote an ostensible motivation which will win public support but will conceal the true motivation for an act. Brand's window-dressing for suggesting an editorial foot-note would be his kindly interest in protecting us in the matter of priority, since the same discovery may conceivably have been made elsewhere as well. His true motivation, of course, would be to publish a subtle criticism of the JBC. As the matter stands then, since you have no objection, the entire initiative for the matter rests in Brand's hands and will not involve us with any responsibility.

There isn't really much new in science as I am now busy working out the behavior of some of our more peculiar mutants. I was pleased to pick up a biotin-requiring mutant last week. The vitamin requiring mutants have in general survived penicillin poorly compared with amine acids, presumably because of syntrophism. In this case we nearly missed the biotin-requiring mutant entirely because in a 24 hour culture it grew on minimal medium nearly as heavily as on enriched medium, being fed by a neighboring non-mutant. Fortunately it had an empty space on the other side of its streak, so there was sufficient gradient of growth to permit us to pick it up.

Dr. Joshua Lederberg

December 14, 1948.

I hope the reprints of your review arrive soon as I am looking forward to reading it and do not have it available in a nearby library.

Leo Szilard has tentatively invited me to Chicago in February, where I hope to see you. Meanwhile, if you get to New York for the holidays I hope you will drop around.

Sincerely yours,



Bernard D. Davis,
Surgeon.

BDD/HL

P.S. - At Brand's request I am sending you the enclosed copy of the "method of counting" communications to the editor of JACS.